

# EXPLOSIVE RUNES

issue 7

THE DUNGEON OF HO-GYROTH  
AN EPISODIC ADVENTURE BY  
RONARSCORRUPTION

ORDERS OF UNITY

AN ORIGINAL ARTICLE BY

AMBER E SCOTT

NOTABLE AUTHOR

WITH WORK INCLUDING PAIZOS  
COUNCIL OF THIEVES ADVENTURE PATH

ASK A DND MONSTER

BY MADSATYR

CONSTABLES

A COMIC STRIP BY

ROBI AND LADYOFHATS

FEATURING ARTWORK BY

LADYOFHATS

PAIUTE

KEDCOLEMAN



the official newsletter of [dndog.com](http://dndog.com)



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Letter From the Editor**    page 3

**To DM or Not to DM**    page 4  
RonarsCorruption

**The DnDOG Literary Review**    page 6  
Sir MadMike, Naresh

**The Eye of Lakoradak**    page 8  
Fiction by D.H. Austin

**Making the Game Yours**    page 17  
frailmage

**Orders of Unity**    page 20  
Amber E. Scott

**Origins (part 1)**    page 28  
Securis

**The Dungeon of Ho-Gyroth**    page 33  
RonarsCorruption

**Constables**    page 38

**Ask Amy**    page 39

**Ask a D&D Monster**    page 40  
MadSatyr

**Open Gaming Licence**    page 43

**Editor-in-Chief** - JayRob

**Assistant Editor** - RonarsCorruption

**Copy Editor** - cyranojoe - **Graphical Editor** - kedcoleman

**Contributors**

Amber E. Scott, AxeMan, D.H. Austin, frailmage, kedcoleman, LadyofHats, MadSatyr, aresh, pai-ute, Robi, RonarsCorruption, Securis, SirMadMike

## A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

**Dear Readers,**

It's been a long time, but a new issue of Explosive Runes is finally out! There's no way I could have done this on my own, and I bow my head to the incredibly talented staff I have had the privilege to work with on this issue. I especially want to thank ked-coleman, who's layout skills have made this issue look it's best!

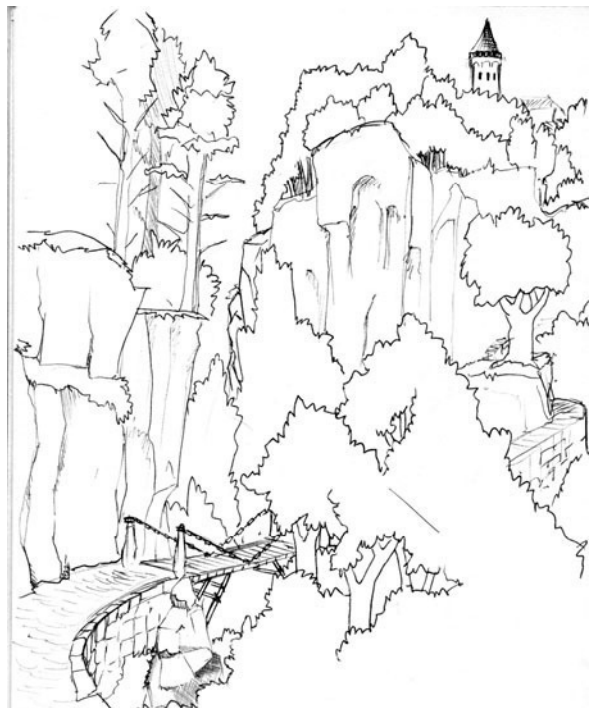
The biggest news on Dn-DOG since the last issue is of course the upgrade to Dn-DOG 4.0. This long-awaited upgrade came on as a surprise to most of us, but the site has been running a lot more efficiently than it has in the past, despite some initial difficulty. This was due to a lot of hard work by our cod-

ers and administrators, and we owe them a lot of thanks for their volunteer efforts. Thank you to everyone who donated for their time.

There's an incredible level of creative energy flowing on DnDOG, and I'm really glad that we have this outlet available to showcase it. I hope you enjoy **Explosive Runes #7!**

Sincerely,

**JayRob**  
**Editor**



# TO DM OR NOT TO DM

BY RONARS CORRUPTION

To have a good game, either in real life, on in play by post, you need two important things, a Dungeon Master and some players. From there, you can go just about anywhere. Players are easy to come by, and even good players could be found on any street corner, because the amount of work required to play is much less than the amount of work required to DM.

My Name is **RonarsCorruption**, and I've been a Dungeon Master for over ten years, here to give you some tips on how to make a great game, and how to run it smoothly.

The first thing you need for a game is an opening adventure. A lot of people like to have huge campaign settings, or epic stories planned from day one. If that's you, hold on a second and take a breather. While it is a good idea to have some setting for the players to build their characters in, the first adventure of every game should be there for the DM to judge what the players want out of the game. Some players are there for story, some are there for adventure, some are there for treasure, and a precious few are there to actually accomplish things and make a difference in the game world. As such,

your first adventure should contain a little of everything. A place to help out, some mystery as to what's going on, some monsters to smash, some treasure to grab, and so on.

You might look at that list and think that sounds like a very bland and generic adventure, and you'd be right. But bland and generic doesn't make it boring. The party meeting in a tavern and being given a quest to kill orcs is exactly as interesting as you as a DM make it. A boring encounter would comprise of an orc with a spear in a ten foot by ten foot room. Without changing any of the elements, you can create an interesting one that consists of a burly orcish warrior learning to fight in an enclosed space using his ancestral spear. See what I mean?

But excitement and flavor is something that come with DM experience. Right now, you're feeling out your players. Do they get really excited when they're looting the bodies? Do they cheer when they take down the fireball slinging villain? Are they clinging onto your every word as you read out the criminal's daring scheme? It's important to watch your players reactions during the first adventure, because that tells you what sort of epic campaign you should open into, or if you should open into one at all.

In play by post, you can't watch when the players are smiling or frowning, but there's two analogues you can use instead. Post quality, and post frequency. When a player in a PbP game is having fun, they tend to elaborate more on what they're doing, or at very least check the thread for updates and post more often. If you notice long elaborate posts describing how they kick down a door and scan the room for baddies, you know they enjoy that. If one person tends to chat up every

NPC they meet, note that they enjoy doing so. If you notice them waiting until five minutes after you post each round of combat, but update less often in towns, you know their preference.

But be very wary of what the players actually say they want. A player might say that he wants to create a powerful character and tear through hordes of villains, and they'd probably enjoy it, but there's a hidden desire underneath that request. In order to rip apart a swarm of skeletons, they first need to reach the power to do so. They need treasure, and experience. In order to get their own land and build a castle, they need to first empower themselves to gain favor with the king. What the player wants, what the player needs, and what the player claims or believes they want or need can be very different things. If a player asks for something reasonable, like more monsters per encounter, give it to them.

But don't just blindly give players everything they request - you are the DM after all. Once all their fondest wishes have been granted, the game still needs to be fun to play, and that's something

that it takes hundreds of sessions as both player and DM to learn. Sometimes it's easy, when players want to feel like they're cutting a swath through their enemies add lots of little guys that fall down in one hit. When players want to find lots of treasure, give them lots of rings and bracelets and goblets studded with gems. When they want more challenge have the monsters lay an ambush. It's all a balancing act, but don't be afraid to ask if the players are enjoying the changes you make.

Once your first adventure is over, only then do you plan out how the rest of the game is going to run. Are there going to be lots of little encounters? Only a few fights, but all of them big and dangerous? Do the players enjoy eeking all they can out of the limited treasure you give them, or do they prefer to be given big piles of it every ten minutes? Is the story going to be all-important and encompassing, or will it take second place to the action?

As a DM, there are a lot of things under your control in the game, and the most important one is how much fun the players are having. To keep that high, you have to take into account how this first adventure goes, and run from there. You might find yourself in a direction you never saw coming, and loving every minute of it.



## Introduction by SirMadmike

Ladies and Gents, first of all I'd like to say welcome again to the second piece of our newly formed DND OG Literary Review of the month. We are absolutely delighted to bring you wonderful works of literature from our own community.

Our review this month was nominated by the community. It is a poem that tells a tale of one of the oldest, and most true problems that a government or any type of faction can face. How a just, and proper cause can turn into an ugly, and indecent act. Deathloop does a magnificent job of weaving this story into a poem, that conveys the utmost feeling of this situation.

AND SO WITHOUT FURTHER ADO WE BRING YOU **Deathloop's**, *Far Hath the Fair Fell'd*



## Far Hath The Fair Fell'd

Pride is dead. Slain by your sword.  
Drink death unshriven. Feast upon woe.

Whereat? Whereelse.

Your. Lords'. Halls.

further ministers fat filled complacence  
terminus of fettered folks obeisance

Valour's teeth hath grown long.  
pitchforks blunted, claws drawn  
Lords turn callow, and justice wrongs  
brave hearts hath fallowed, o'erlong  
thrice color'd tongued thugs awoken  
pursuant bygone chevaliers, now broken  
integrity and strength attain especial disdain  
when weasels and fat jewelled fingers,  
rule the day.

but our solace is in dark places  
perforce sought amidst foul traces  
the indigent proud weave their fate with,  
NOTHING  
and LO!

INTERVIEW WITH  
THE AUTHOR

BY NARESH

**How long have you been writing poetry?**

Oh, I dunno. Fifteen years?

**Are you a published Author?**

Pffft. No.

**Have you ever wanted to publish work?**

No. Even if I was productive enough as a writer to warrant publishing, I probably

wouldn't. My main artistic medium is paint and I give my paintings away to friends and family instead of selling [them].

**Why did you write the poem?**

Well uh... It's a commentary on our society. It is specifically about the homogenization of the individual.

**What phrase/line really stands out to you?**

That would have to be: thrice color'd tongued thugs awoken. It's fun to say out loud.

**What Poets have influenced you?**

Well I enjoy prose much more than metered poetry, but my favorite poets are Isidore Lucien Ducasse and J. R. R. Tolkien. I would highly recommend Isidore's *Les Chants de Maldoror* (original french or Alexis Lykiard's translation) and Tolkien's *Silmarillion* and *Children of Hurin*.

**What are you currently involved with on DnDOG?**

I'm playing a two hundred and forty pound butch named Buttercup in Jondra's fallout game.

**Planning on entering the next poetry competition?**

Sure, if I have something I think is acceptable.

**Any advice for other poets?**

No, I don't think I'm really in a place to give advice.



# THE EYE OF LAKORADAK

A SHORT STORY BY D H AUSTIN

The caves we descended into were not the sort I would normally want to be involved in, but if we were going to have any chance of helping the Sisterhood, then we needed to be here.

Tonight we were going down the “chimney”, as it were: a deep crack along the ridge line above the Calairy Falls, and into the tunnels below the river. Meighan, in her hybrid form, stood at the top, secured carefully in order to lower me down. As she did, I was hit by how much she affected me.

My eyes continually returned to the outfit I’d had made for her to wear on this underground adventure: a set of shorts and halter crafted of reinforced leather, intended to not be binding or restrictive and still protect her sensitive parts (and my eyes). The ensemble allowed her to carry accessory rings and buckles to aid her in climbing or extra tools that I could not attach to my chair. It was also very revealing... thus making it harder than I expected to keep my mind on managing the ropes while keeping my custom chair from getting wedged in the wrong place.

She was just so damned beautiful.

\*\*\*

In her hybrid form, Meighan’s fur was dark black and short; more like a German Shepherd than any kind of wolf, actually. Her body was strong, yet so soft-looking, and shaped without a misplaced curve or muscle. Beautiful, but... although I’ve been in this world

of Hamth for almost 20 years, I’m still unnerved by things as unnatural as an anthropomorphic creature -- human in appearance, and yet not human at all.

Long ago, James had tried to explain this concept called the “Uncanny Valley” to me, about how people respond to things that have human-like qualities but are not completely human, and how a creature like a Wyfwolf must act on the human psyche, blowing it way off of the scale or something like that. I never really understood his explanation, but that was his way. It didn’t help that although he had come to Hamth from Earth like I had, he’d passed over from a time nearly 20 years after my own, and thus he spoke of ‘web sites’ and ‘wiki-things’ as if I knew what it all meant.

And there was also the magic, and getting used to that. Being a lycanthrope was mostly natural here, but each of its manifestations were suffused with different degrees of magic, and in this I had done some research. The Wyfwolf is a highly magical creature, even more so than the Weretiger or the Wyfrabbit, but it is not as magical as the Wyffox, a creature so rare no one I had spoken to could recall any record of one in this part of the world for over a hundred years.

The types of magic to be found in the Wyfwolf belonged to categories the Abjuration and Enchantment schools of magic. While in

my studies I have come to understand the Enchantment spells fairly well, and I can work some of this magic with a high level of skill, the Abjuration stuff... well, it's difficult for me to even comprehend that kind of magic.

Abjuration is infused in many of the magical creatures of this world; it gives them certain immunities, and in some cases blocks other types of magic from having a "predictable" effect on them. I am told that even the most accomplished wizards of this world have an incomplete grasp at best of the intricacies of Abjuration spells and their effects.

Meighan's magical nature worked without her being aware of its power. She was not only physically beautiful, striking in appearance, but the magic also increased her sex appeal, and could make a weak-minded individual hopelessly enthralled by her. Even if you did not look at her directly, the effect was always there. This magical presence drew your attention toward her and captured you almost completely. It made you want to stop doing whatever you were doing; it made you want to be her friend, or more. And while some might be delighted to possess such a quality, for Meighan, it was a curse.

You should know that my feelings for Meighan are genuine. I am not just another man under the spell of a Wyf-wolf. I'm not immune to her charms; it's not like that. I can feel her magic working when she is around me. But it isn't -- it doesn't work on me the same way it works on people of this world.

I suppose it is this very thing, this power of this world's magic to charm people and rob them of their will, that attracted me to it. This skill I wanted led me to become what the locals call a "Master" of the Bardic Colleges.

In Hamth, some people learn to manipulate emotions; they can enthrall and provoke with song, poem, or dance. These Bards must train at special schools very much like the universities of Earth, in fact, very much like the one I was enrolled in before I left, California State University at Long Beach. It seems ironic to me how the world I came from celebrated those with great talent in the performing arts -- actors, singers, musicians -- without ever realizing that some of the greatest of them were actually practicing, unconsciously, simple forms of magic that in this world are considered the domain of scholars.

In any case, while Meighan's affect on me did have a magical quality -- I would never deny that -- my feelings for her were of another level. Even if you dismiss as exaggeration everything else I tell you, I hope this one thing you believe, and this one thing you respect above any other.

It was not always easy being in love with her that way, particularly when I knew she did not feel the same about me. But things change. Even our simple arrangement had to change. Soon after we first met, we'd agreed that she would stay with me, for a while, and I would do what I could to find out why two thugs had been paid to throw her down a well.

In the first few weeks, I learned she'd run afoul of the two men -- Larrou and Marscale -- at least once before, and it had not gone well for them. I had had trouble with them before myself. But it wasn't vengeance that drove them. I knew that.

Larrou and Marscale were not the brightest of men. I wouldn't call them evil, though they did make poor choices -- taking odd jobs and asking few questions. In all that, though, I had not known them to be vengeful. Whatever reason they had had for trying to send Meighan into that enchanted prison, a well from which the imprisoned could only escape with help from without, there was a solid chance it involved monetary payment. Those two never worked an honest day in their lives, but they never wanted for spending money, either.

So Meighan stayed with me. She made herself useful around the shop, learned to run the press, and quickly became a good friend. We got through a couple of moons that were hard on her, but as winter approached, she told me she was feeling stronger. She figured she could probably control her transformations by the time the next harvest moon rolled around.

Her lycanthropy, though of course rare, was at the same time less frightening than most other variations of the condition. In any case, it was never a problem for me, at least that is what I told her... what I tried to tell myself... what was nothing but a big fat lie.

When this adventure began, Meighan had been living with me almost five months. We had not made much progress finding out why she had been tossed down that well -- Larrou and Marscale had disappeared -- but my own goals were progressing nicely. In that time, Meighan had developed

at least some attraction to me, and we were closer than just friends. Not as close as I hoped we would be, someday, but still close, and there were times like this one, when she was lowering me down into those caves, that I fought off feelings for her that, had I let them get out of control, they might just ruin everything we had built together.

Just looking up at her in that outfit, her arms working the ropes through the rings and carabineers, her legs stretched out and supporting her weight across the gap between the two rock walls, muscles tightened, little beads of sweat forming on her nose... well, it took my breath away and sent my mind adrift.

"Pay attention to what you are supposed to be doing and stop staring at my chest," Meighan's bark cut into my thoughts. Right. I was supposed to be getting my chair down to the bottom of this cave. Not enjoying the view.

"I'm paying attention. What do you think I'm doing? You're doing great, and everything is going according to plan. What's the problem?" I asked back, trying my best to sound innocent.

She reminded me how bad I was at pretending to be innocent.

"You are so full of it. Just look below and tell me how much more slack you need. I'm almost out of rope."

Below me, the "chimney" curved, gradually, to the right, but I could see a light glowing strongly from that direction and judged it to be about 20 or 30 more feet. The walls above us had been dry, but here, where they began

to bend, they became more moist, and I began to wonder if the floor of the cave was dry still, like it had been so many years ago, or if the river had finally cut through the rocks to fill these caverns as the creatures who once inhabited this place always predicted it would.

“About thirty feet, and it’s going to get easier in a bit, because I think I can get the wheels onto the lower wall here soon,” I called up to her.

She gave me a nod, and then a smile. The smile, strange for the partial wolf-like features of her face, was honest -- a precious thing, something she had taken some time to bring herself to do around me. When she smiled like that, I knew the kind of trust she was placing in me, and I felt good, and at the same time challenged. Those smiles were so warm. Losing them would be worse than losing a part of me, something I didn’t want to ever have to think about.

“You’re staring again,” she said, and followed it up with one of her practiced and highly effective growls.

I shook myself, forced my thoughts to move elsewhere. My mind naturally leapt to the beginning, the start of this adventure. Five days ago, a woman from my past came into our shop, and launched us on this journey.

Eleanor Hamilden was a high-ranking officer in a quasi-military religious order known as the Sovereign Sisterhood -- a volunteer organization of women ded-

icated to charitable works in support of the dominant religion of this part of the world. Many years ago, when I was caught up in things dangerous and stupid, she had been a priest of the church, and we went through many things together. We became like brother and sister. She had a different purpose to her life then, a bit on the fanatical side I suppose -- but like me, she had been through a life-altering event or two since then, and in this quiet morning she seemed more relaxed.

Maybe it was her current position in the organization, or maybe it was just the passing of years, but immediately I recognized a far calmer attitude about her. In the shadow of that change, I felt awkward. In your more mature years, it can be difficult to meet people you knew when you were young and adrenaline was your master.

She came into the shop in full uniform, with two attendants following close behind her. It was early in a mid-week morning, just after we’d opened for business, and aside from their appearance, things were slow as usual. Her blue and gold pants, dark green sash, and tasseled epaulettes would look ridiculous on anyone else, but on Eleanor they were appropriate. Her face was still beautiful, though more mature, obviously, and her hair was not the lustrous red-gold it once had been; now almost completely red, worn in the style of her order -- a simple ponytail tied high on the back of her head.

Her eyes bore the weight of many cares and worries, though her gaze was still strong. She didn’t hide her emotions. Not that she would ever try. She was that kind of person: honest, forgiving, and determined to always do what was right.

"Eleanor," I said as soon as she came through the door, my hands working the wheels of my chair. "It's so good to see you."

She leaned down and hugged my shoulders, and let her cheek touch mine.

"I'm glad to see you, too, Terquem," she said. Standing straight again, she looked around at the store. A pretense, I knew -- she had seen it before and it had hardly changed in the years since her last visit. "Your shop is quite nice. I like what you have done with it."

She trailed off as Meighan came in from the back room, carrying six newly printed copies of a small book of poems written by a dwarf ascetic who lived four centuries ago. I had finally put the set into print last year, and it had become a popular-selling item for young romantics.

"Good morning," Eleanor said.

Meighan, well, she didn't say anything. Just looked at the oddly dressed woman, then at me, and then back at Eleanor... and turned away, back to her work.

"She's friendly," Eleanor said to me.

"She is a hard worker. Likes to stay on task," I said as I gave Meighan a disapproving frown, then turned back to my old friend. "So... what brings you back to Baranam, Eleanor?"

"I need help."

Eleanor did not need my help. She had never needed my help. The things I could do, the things I was good at, had no place in her world. But I knew what kind of help she did need. She needed him. She needed Dicl.

I looked at her in that way that says, 'I'm waiting for you to ask me, and I won't say anything more until you do.' One of those looks between friends that speaks volumes about what you've been through together, and what your friendship should mean to each other. Eleanor relented quickly.

"A few weeks ago, one of our missions to the west -- near the mountains -- was taken under arms by a tribe of Gnolls. They came under the banner of a chief who claims humankind has no right in their lands. We have been working at a peace accord with the greater tribes for months now, and we cannot afford to have this situation escalate into open warfare. Those who did not escape are still being held hostage by the Gnolls, who are demanding a ransom. We are told there are forty from the mission, including members of the Sisterhood, a few priests and some missionaries, as well as another fifty or so displaced refugees."

"They are demanding to be told the location of the secret tombs of one of their ancient war-chiefs, something called the King of Drall. They say it was buried in an underground shrine in the Holdandun Mountains, a lost city or some such thing."

I nodded. "The Shrine of Rasperin. I know the legend. I have a book here on Kobold mythology that has some of the details." I turned my chair toward the wall, where I thought I had seen the large book a few days earlier. "But it is highly suspect literature; no hard evidence exists to support the claim that the city ever

existed. There are some stories about a blind queen, and a portal called Takra-Dor, but if you read the legends, it implies that these places were buried under a mountain, centuries ago. Certainly no one has ever found them, not even the Yrraduluns. Besides, I don't think he would go back to Holdandun, even if I told him you asked."

"What makes you think I wanted you to talk to him?" she said, and for the first time her voice had recovered some of the old fire.

I turned my chair back toward her. "You came here to get me to get him to help you. I don't for one minute think you came here to read a book of old Kobold legends."

"You know it would be awkward if he knew I was looking for him."

"So what?" I folded my arms across my chest. "You two have your problems. They're not my problems. If you want his help, why do I need to get involved?"

And then a new voice snapped into our conversation: "Is there a problem, Ma'am?"

I had never considered that Meighan was the curious type. She had always affected a controlled, disinterested manner whenever anyone came into my shop. But the way Eleanor and I kept throwing the impersonal pronouns, Him, He, Him... it finally got to her.

Meighan stepped hard between Eleanor and I, her hands on her hips,

her shoulders pushed forward. The way she shook her head from side to side as she spoke, trying to look like she was in charge, was too cute to believe.

At that moment, I wondered if it was ever going to be worth the effort to try explaining to Meighan how her true nature opposed her mannerisms every step of the way. She wanted to be taken seriously, and yet she had not yet grasped that what she was made it hard for her to be anything other than adorable, and certainly never threatening.

As much as I was touched but unimpressed by Meighan's protective display, Eleanor was much less moved. Her smirk seemed to say, "Are you kidding me?" Unfortunately, Eleanor's bodyguards were not as hands-off as she was. Young, and perhaps inexperienced, they darted toward Meighan with the intention of subduing her immediately. This is the way of the Sisterhood: act first, understand later, if ever. But they were in for a startling surprise.

Meighan leapt a full ten feet directly backward, landing on the railing of the stairs that lead up to our apartment. As the two women scrambled to keep from colliding into each other, Eleanor drew a wand from her side -- I had not even noticed she was armed -- and directed its magic toward Meighan. I recognized the words of her spell as Hold Person, and so I waited, arms still crossed, for Eleanor's surprise as Meighan's lycanthropic nature dismissed the spell with ease.

Twisting her feet below and around her, Meighan slid down the banister and landed at the base of the stairs, her fists in front of her ready to fight. Her stance was all wrong -- she must have learned to fight on the streets, and with no one's help -- but still, she was a bit more threatening than she was before.

Before Eleanor could do something more effective, and possibly more harmful, I reached out with both hands in front of me and shouted, “All right! That’s enough!”

There was a pause. Everyone in the room took a few breaths, and then, to my surprise, things settled down as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened.

Meighan walked cautiously over to stand behind my chair. “Who is this ‘he’ you keep talking about?” she asked.

“‘He’ is James Allen Dicel,” I said. I introduced the two to each other at last: “Eleanor, this is Meighan; Meighan, this is an old friend of mine, Eleanor Hamilden. Eleanor and Dicel have a history together that is long and complicated. Dicel is a very old friend of mine, someone I care a great deal about but don’t see much of these days. He is something of a hero in this part of the world, but he is also something of a scoundrel as well. He and I spent many years together, learning about this world and the way things work here.”

I turned my chair away from Eleanor; she spoke quietly to her guards, and they, with unpleasant looks on their faces, went outside to wait.

“Why do you still use the chair?” Eleanor asked. She was clearly trying to get me to change the subject.

“You know why.”

\*\*\*

Eleanor sighed. It was not something I had ever heard her do before. It was a sad sound, and seemed heavy, even for a woman of such a strong reputation.

“Look, Terquem.” She tried to come closer, only to have Meighan step out from behind my chair protectively. This was really above and beyond... for the first time, I really knew that Meighan was beginning to have feelings for me.

After retreating a step and proffering a smile, Eleanor went on. “What I need is an object – an artifact said to be in the old Naga caves along the Wy River. It is the Eye of the Lako-radak.”

“It’s said to be cursed, though its powers have been exhausted, but I’m hoping the stories are wrong. You and Dicel have been to those caves – you told me so yourself. I would send officers of the Sisterhood, but the caves are in Kobold territory, and part of our negotiations include respecting those boundaries until official maps can be drawn up. If you could ask... him... to try to recover the Eye, then with it, we may be able to locate this tomb the Gnolls are so interested in. There is even a Kobold scholar willing to help us put the Eye to use.”

“I’m not going to ask you to go, not if you insist on using the chair when you don’t need to, but if he can get the Eye, then I have a good chance of releasing the people held in that mission.”

“You don’t need to use the chair?” Meighan interrupted. And things suddenly got more complicated than I wanted.

For a moment, I didn’t know what to say. Explaining everything to Meighan would take a

lot of time, and this was not the time to even try. Before I could summon anything to say, Eleanor went and made it even worse.

“You still have the ring, don’t you?”

“The ring isn’t part of this, and you promised not to talk about it. Remember?” I couldn’t hide the anger in my voice.

“Have it your way,” Eleanor said. I suddenly realized she was putting me in this situation for leverage purposes. Make me uncomfortable around the girl, she must have thought, and I will agree to contact Dicel just to make her go away.

So I took her lead and ran with it.

“If you want me to contact James about this eye of whatever, I will, but this time you need to put it in writing. Everything. Spell out exactly what it is you want him to do, and I will give him the message.” Yes, I knew what the Eye was – I was simply playing dumb for Meighan’s sake.

Eleanor smiled, but this was an official smile, one I didn’t like. She said, “Thank you, Terquem,” and turned to leave.

It might have seemed like everything was done, and I could let it all go back to being the way it was, but when it comes to people like Eleanor, and James, I had learned my lesson. So I was not at all surprised when she stopped at the door and turned back.

To Meighan, she said: “He hasn’t told you why he is in that chair, has he? He needs it, that’s not a lie. Even the spells available to the highest trained priests in Ses Theeth are unable to undo the damage done to his body. But if he hasn’t told you why he is in that chair, and why he knows he doesn’t have to stay like that, and what part in it James Dicel plays, then he hasn’t told you anything about who he really is.”

Eleanor put that knife right into my back, but it was with every good intention. And she was right.

“Thank you again, Terquem.” Finally, mercifully, she left.

In the wake of Eleanor’s departure, Meighan simply turned and went back to work on the books. She didn’t say anything. But I knew I needed to. There was a lot to explain.

I was afraid, very afraid, that Meighan was being silent because she felt I’d betrayed her trust, like so many others in her life had done, and that she was just waiting for the day to end so she could leave. Leave me permanently, that is.

For a moment, she stopped straightening books, and looked off through the storefront window. “You don’t have to tell me anything about what she was talking about,” she said. I was floored.

“You have tried to be honest with me. I know you have, and I know there are probably a hundred things about you that you haven’t told me. There are a few I haven’t told you about me. I don’t always know how to be the right kind of person, and I know you like me more than you let on, and I don’t mind that, but I like you, too, and I butted in when I

shouldn't have. No one has ever treated me like a person, like the kind of person you think I am, and that's nice. You deserve the same. If there are things you want me to know, you can tell me, and I promise that if you want me to keep them secret, I will do so. Just tell me one thing first."

She walked toward me and knelt down in front of my chair.

"Can you promise me that no matter what happens, you will never regret what you did for me?"

I was not prepared for that question. It had never crossed my mind that I ever would regret what I did, but in her asking I realized how afraid she must be, and how little she really understood about what she was.

"For as long as you are willing to call me your friend, for as long as you allow me to be a part of your life, I will..."

"NO!" she shouted, and turned away from me quickly. "No, none of those things matter! You pulled me out of that well. YOU did that. I would have stayed down there until someone else, or something else got me out of there, a year, a hundred years later... I don't know how it works. But it was YOU who did it. And every day since, I have watched you stare at me, and I know what people want from me, I do, I'm

not stupid, but you keep trying to be something else, and I really don't know why, but it is making me want to be here. I want to know why you are the way you are, but it's something I never expected, so you have to promise me that no matter what, no matter what -- you will never regret what you did."

"I will never regret what I did," I said.

And if you hear from anyone else that I cried that day, well some things in a story you just forget to mention, and that might be one of them.

As I touched down, I went over the events of that day in the shop in my mind. Automatically, I called up for Meighan to secure the rope, reminded her to bring down the rest of our gear, told her to be careful because the walls were slippery near the bottom. But my thoughts were on that day.

That day, Meighan could not be talked out of going with me, since I insisted on going to the caves with Dicel to recover the Eye. That day, I realized that she meant as much to me as apparently I meant to her. That day, I stopped worrying about what I could or could not do again because of the accident that put me in this wheelchair. And on that day, a new adventure began in our lives that would bring back old friends, and old enemies as well.

I never suspected that Meighan's life was tied to these events more intricately than any of us could have imagined.

# MAKING THE GAME YOURS

BY FRAILMAGE

So you've got this idea for a *Paladin Sorcerer*. Not only does she smite evil, she stops all evil from approaching her. Her sword is a +3 cold iron longsword, and her familiar is a celestial eagle. She rides into battle on a pure white stallion, and is known across the land as the bane of evil. You love this idea for a character... but the current classes just don't fill her niche. What to do?

This is where custom content comes into play.

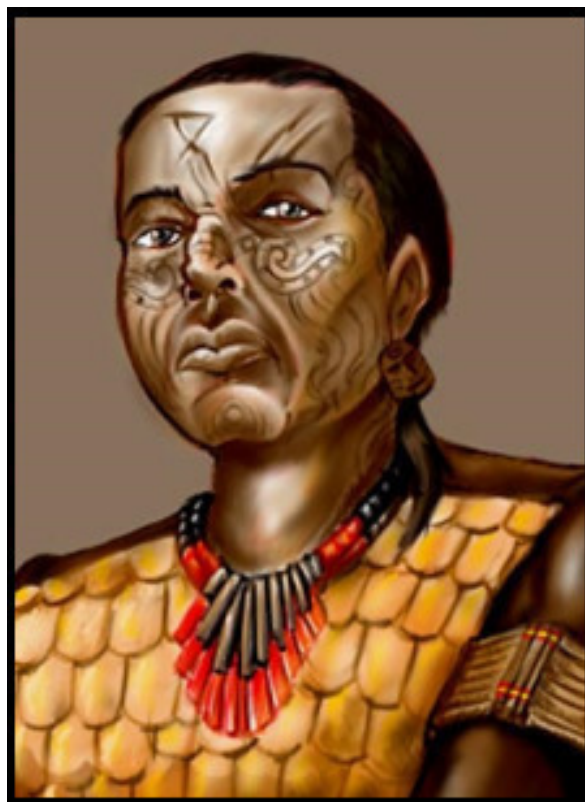
Personally, making my character my own is my favorite part of D&D. Sometimes that means designing features and classes that didn't exist before -- like a custom prestige class!

The first thing to do is ask, what is the main idea of the class? In this case, it is a paladin who uses both sorcery and sword to destroy evil. Next question: What abilities are needed to make this happen? Because we are doing an armored caster, we will want an ability that reduces the chance of spell failure caused by armor. Let's use an existing case to get a balanced ability: the *Beguiler* in the *Players Handbook II* has an

armored cast ability that reduces spell failure by 10%. Let's take that.

Next, we want abilities to destroy evil... with prejudice! The paladins' *Smite Evil* is very nice here; let's expand on it and see what we can do for the arcane side of our arcane-casting paladin. *Magic Circle Against Evil* looks like it would fit nicely here. So we'll make this the paladin's supernatural ability.

Now that we have picked a feature concept for the class, we need to work out its rules. Paladins cast their spells using Charisma, as do sorcerers, so it makes sense to use the CHA modifier as a base. Using this modifier, we should choose how many times the ability is usable per day. If you look at supernatural abilities, you'll see they tend to be usable at "X+ the ability modifier," never going below 0 uses per day, so we just have to pick a reasonable X-variable.



Now for the save, we have a few options here because we are merging two classes, the Paladin and the Sorcerer. Here is where you get to have a bit of fun with the RP side of the class.



Do you want your Paladin Sorcerer to have mastered the arcane arts in order to further her fight against evil? Or did she join the ranks of paladins for their deep hatred of evil, and felt they needed the aid of divine wrath to thwart the evil they fought? These are the kinds of questions you want to ask, because whichever class is the 'base class' for your new Prestige Class should determine how the saves work.

In this case, because Magic Circle Against Evil is an arcane spell (and because I prefer arcane casters), I am going to say that it uses the DC of the sorcerer. Another option would be to say that the save is equal to the save of a sorcerer half the level of your paladin/sorcerer. But I am going to say that this uses the sorcerer's Will save.

With the saves and daily usage worked

out, let's focus on the actual casting requirements. Magic Circle spells require a costly component, so let's find a reasonable substitute. A big part of being a paladin is having a nice mount that hails from the celestial realm. So I'm going to make our mount the focus of this ability. Thus, rather than have the paladin/sorcerer need to lay out the diamond dust, we'll make them use their mount as the focus point for spell. It can't work without them!

The Magic Circle needs to stick around for a while -- so let's say it radiates from the mount for an amount of rounds equal to the paladin/sorcerer's Charisma modifier, plus however much time they can spend concentrating on the spell.

That's it! Let's finish this off with a catchy name. I like "Anti-Evil Aura":

**Anti-Evil Aura:** The paladin/sorcerer channels the energy of his celestial mount to form an aura that functions as Magic Circle Against Evil for a number of rounds equal to his Charisma modifier plus the length of time the paladin/sorcerer spends concentrating on the ability. This power uses the save of the arcane caster class that the paladin/sorcerer has levels in. This ability is usable a number of times per day equal to the paladin/sorcerer's Charisma modifier + the character's level.

Now it's time to edit what we have.

The biggest problem with the wording is that we don't have a class name yet. Look for a suitable name that describes both the characteristics and ability of the class. Let's go with **Arcane Justice**.

As for the ability itself, it looks like it could

be overpowered. A good way to limit an ability is to either remove one of the variables that feed its power (in this case, the Charisma modifier or the character's level), or to restrict its daily usage more. In this case, let's change its usage to 1/day at level one, and another usage per day at every odd level. So now our description of the ability looks like this:

**Anti-Evil Aura:** The Arcane Justice radiates an aura from his celestial mount that acts as the Magic Circle Against Evil spell. This ability is used as a third level spell when checking the DC. Anti-Evil Aura is usable once per day at level one, with an additional user per day at each odd level. The aura lasts for a number of rounds equal to the character's Charisma modifier plus the amount of time the Arcane Justice spends concentrating on the ability.

I like it!

So, how did we get here? We started our custom prestige class by first thinking of an idea. What does this special class specialize in? In this example, it was the destruction of all evil. Secondly, we asked, what type of abilities should this class have? Here we had a base character of paladin/sorcerer. So we gave it an arcane spell ability that repelled evil.

Then we worked out how the ability functions. Be sure to include details such as how long it lasts, any special requirements for its use (e.g., the celestial mount as a focus), and any other limits. Finally, we revised the ability description to eliminate confusion and any overpowering factors. This included giving a name to the class.

Now that we've got our prestige class off to a great start, we'll want to consider the casting progression, skill requirements, and other features. But that's for next time



# ORDERS OF UNITY

BY AMBER E. SCOTT

EXPLOSIVE RUNES

While paladins can operate independently, many devote themselves to a church or order. These orders sometimes form around a particular geographical location, a particular religion, or a shared ideology. Membership in one order generally disqualifies a paladin from joining any other order.

However, four special orders exist which serve to bind other orders together. These four groups work with other paladin orders, in some cases serving them, like the Knights of Immortality, in other cases policing them, like the Exemplars. While it is rare for a paladin to belong to two orders at once, it is not unheard of. For instance, a paladin dedicated to a god of law and justice might belong to a church hierarchy and also serve with the Exemplars. Such paladins must juggle their obligations carefully, never neglecting their primary duties while serving their second order.

Each order possesses strict entry requirements, detailed below. Members of these special orders gain numerous benefits, both mechanical and roleplaying. Consider your paladin's personality, goals, and moral values when selecting

an order for her to join. As always, your GM has final say on whether these orders exist in your world.

## THE KNIGHTS OF IMMORTALITY

Just as there are degrees of good, there are degrees of evil. A murderer is evil; a murderer who targets innocents is vile. And a murderer who slays a paladin is truly despicable.

The Knights of Immortality dedicate their lives to remembering their fallen comrades and tracking down paladin-killers. These knights serve in their usual capacities for other churches and orders. But when a paladin falls, the nearest Knights of Immortality take it upon themselves to investigate the matter. They provide funeral rites for their comrade and, if necessary, bring her killer to justice. Most importantly, they learn all they can about the late knight's life and accomplishments and commit them to memory. Paladins never need fear that their names will vanish into history upon their deaths. The Knights of Immortality remember.

**History and Hierarchy:** Sir Conrad of the Grey Keep founded the Knights of Immortality 480 years ago. When a blackguard slew his younger brother, also a paladin, Sir Conrad fell into despair. Nearly overwhelmed with grief, he swore an oath to bring his brother's killer to justice or die trying. He sought the killer for a year, growing more and more obsessed with vengeance. Hard as he worked, he never seemed to make any progress.

Then one night Sir Conrad dreamed vividly about his brother, as he was in life. In his dream he played once more with his brother, watched him grow to manhood, sparred with

him, and sat proudly in the church and watched his brother take his vows. On waking, Sir Conrad allowed himself to grieve unabashedly for once, putting aside his lust for vengeance to mourn his brother. He decided that his quest for revenge was ignoble; his purpose became to bring his brother's killer to justice for the good of all, not to ease his own pain. A month later he succeeded in catching the killer. Sir Conrad formed the Knights of Immortality to honor the memory of his brother and other slain paladins.

The descendants of Sir Conrad took up the call of knighthood, and served as Grandmasters of the Knights for 350 years. Lady Lathbie of the Grey Keep broke the chain when she fell in love with a married man and abandoned her order. For another hundred years the Knights continued on without guidance from the Grey Keep. Thirty years ago, Lathbie's great-grandson asked to join the Knights. Sir Pergar underwent many tests and trials before proving his worth. When the Knights were convinced that he was pure-hearted and strong-willed, bearing none of his great-grandmother's weakness, they admitted him. Sir Pergar of the Grey Keep now leads the Knights of Immortality as Grandmaster, serving in the role his notable ancestor filled almost five centuries ago.

Sir Tymas, who bears the title of Memorian, serves as Pergar's second-in-command. While all the knights memorize the lives and deeds of those gone before them, Memorian Tymas documents them and maintains the archives.

**Membership:** A prospective Knight of Immortality must have served as a paladin for a minimum of one year, and during that time must have visibly advanced the cause of good (usually by slaying some great evil). An applicant who has lost her paladin abilities in the past for any reason is automatically disqualified, even if she has since regained her abilities. The order takes no chances with weakness.

It costs 250 gp to gain admission to the order, plus an additional 50 gp a month. The order donates half the money to charity and uses the other half for expenses. A knight who falls on hard times may be granted leniency; a knight who can afford more is encouraged to donate in accordance to her means.

Applicants must also memorize the names and histories of three prominent, now-deceased knights before they are granted admittance. They must memorialize at least two more knights per year.

**Charter:** If a Knight of Immortality hears of a paladin's death, and she is reasonably close (within a week's travel), she is expected to investigate the death and ensure any criminals involved are brought to justice. She must put on hold any current quests in order to pursue a slayer of paladins, unless she already pursues such a villain or unless doing so would put others at risk. She must also provide a proper burial and memorial for the slain, or arrange to have the body sent home (the order compensates for such expenses).

The Knights of Immortality support each other. A knight can always count on healing, shelter, and defense from chapter-houses, for herself and any companions she vouches for. Knights must also assist their fellow members whenever possible.

## THE EXEMPLARS

Paladins, as servants of good and order, prove particularly resistant to coercion and corruption. But if corruption does enter a knightly order, dire consequences follow. An impure paladin may secretly work to corrupt her brethren. Sometimes entire orders turn bad. Good knights have lost their lives at the hands of a blackguard they once counted in their ranks.

Exemplars fight against such corruption. Comprised of only the purest and most incorruptible knights, the Exemplars police other orders. Exemplars investigate rumors of evil and take steps to eliminate that evil should the rumors prove founded.

The Exemplars do not answer to any one kingdom or religion. No order is obligated to submit to an investigation by the Exemplars, or even to recognize them. However, over the years the Exemplars have built a reputation of being solid, pure, and untouchable. To refuse or inhibit an Exemplar investigation looks rude at best — suspicious at worst. Most orders respect the Exemplars, and aid them in any way possible.

**History and Hierarchy:** Centuries ago, devotee named Sibylla Fern found herself in a perilous position. A half-elf, Sibylla had left the forests of her childhood to make her way in more cosmopolitan lands, and on her travels had heard the calling of a righteous god. She joined a small order, hoping to become a knight someday.

Sibylla soon realized that the remote order was wildly corrupt. Knights meted out justice on behalf of those who could pay and turned a blind eye to the pleas of the poor. The order head falsified accounting documents, turning over a pittance in tithes and keeping the rest. Sibylla dared not speak up; she was an outsider, the only non-human and the only woman in the order. But the injustice she saw burdened her soul.

Instead of withdrawing from the order, Sibylla vowed to end the corruption. She slipped out of the chapter-house at night to interview those wronged by the knights, transcribing their statements and obtaining signatures. She documented the crimes she saw the knights commit. She even searched the order's offices, removing pages from the accounting-book and corresponding pages from the falsified records.

During her investigations, Sibylla made friends with the peasant folk. A farmer named Hollas assisted in Sibylla's endeavors and let her hide her collected evidence in his barn.

Ultimately, the order discovered Sibylla's activities and apprehended her one night as she returned from an interview. Tried and judged unfairly by an impromptu tribunal, Sibylla never stood a chance. She was beheaded at dawn.

Hollas the farmer, on hearing of Sibylla's murder, gathered the evidence she had so painstakingly collected and bore it to the capital city. There he found a virtuous knight who brought the story and evidence to the church's attention. The church exposed the corrupt order and brought its members to justice. Sibylla was knighted posthumously, granted the title of Lady Sibylla, Exemplar of Justice.

Other knights, inspired by Lady Sibylla's example, began investigating their own orders for signs of corruption. Over the years, the most virtuous and incorruptible knights gathered together. They took the name Exemplars.

The organization's leader, usually the member with the most experience, goes by the title Exemplar of Justice. An elven knight named Lord Yelden serves as the current Exemplar of Justice.

One main chapter-house serves as the Exemplars' base of operations. Because Exemplars often belong to other organizations, and because they serve as Exemplars only intermittently, few members live in the chapter-house. The organization boasts almost fifty members, and each one possesses a magic ring that allows him to communicate with the chapter-house. In this way, Lord Yelden can assign Exemplars to various tasks.

**Membership:** The Exemplars require all their members to show great mental fortitude. They accept applications only from paladins who have served as a knight for at least five years. During that time, the paladin must have shown courage and tenacity in his actions, such as by hunting down a notorious evildoer. He must also display indifference towards material wealth. Many Exemplars take vows of poverty to show their dedication to the cause of good and not the rewards it offers.

A group of at least three Exemplars judge each new applicant, grilling him

about his history, his deeds, and his motives. The judges use divination magic to probe an applicant's deepest thoughts. These tests take many days to conduct, during which the applicant must remain constantly in the judges' sight. He cannot meet with anyone, contact anyone, or possess anything but what the judges give him

Once the judges are satisfied with their applicant, they pass him on to Lord Yelden. Lord Yelden interviews the applicant and utilizes auguries to assess the applicant's worth. If the divinations prove favorable, the applicant may join the Exemplars for a one-year trial period. During this year, the applicant assists other Exemplars in their duties but does not take any solo missions. Every month he must send a report of his experiences to the chapter-house. He returns for a review in six months, and again at the year's end. If Lord Yelden approves of the applicant's conduct during this time, he knights the applicant and makes him an official Exemplar.

Once an applicant joins the Exemplars, he must give up all money and valuable items to the organization. The Exemplars distribute all money not used for expenses to a variety of charities. Three Exemplars maintain the accounting records, which are available for any to view. Exemplars may spend money they earn on their own equipment, and reserve a small amount for daily expenses, but must tithe the rest to the organization or to a charity.

While the Exemplars try to limit their work to evaluating other organizations, they will make occasional exceptions to aid their own members. They give such aid only in the direst of need.

Exemplars must check in at the chapter-house at least once every six months. During this time they meditate, pray, assist in the management of the organization, and undergo divinations and interviews to make sure they are still pure and devoted to the cause.

**Charter:** Exemplars serve as an investigative force that keeps other orders in line. Lord Yelden assigns Exemplars to missions he has deemed worthy. Exemplars are expected to be ruthless in their duties; they ask difficult, direct, embarrassing questions. They ferret out hidden motives and allegiances. They use stealth, candor, and divination magic as their tools. Exemplars have the freedom to approach a situation as they see fit, but Yelden encourages directness over guile.

Once an Exemplar has finished his investigation, he writes a report of all his activities and findings. These reports remain at the chapter-house, and anyone may copy or review them.

## WARDENS OF THE SEVEN KINGDOMS

Nothing draws a people together like tragedy, and great dangers serve to unite people as well as divide them. When a town, a city, or even a country faces a danger too large to handle on its own, the Wardens of the Seven Kingdoms come to its aid.

Brave fighters and gallant knights form the Wardens. Ancient dragons, powerful liches, and demon princes have all

fallen to the Wardens. Without them, many countries and cities would now lie in ruins. Kingdoms may plot and scheme against each other, but when danger threatens, they join together under the banner of the Wardens of the Seventeen Kingdoms.

**History and Hierarchy:** The Wardens owe their genesis to the great red dragon Coalaxys. With a vast humanoid army, several powerful lieutenants, and his own considerable powers, Coalaxys marched on the civilized lands in an effort to claim them.

The kingdoms Coalaxys targeted were life-long enemies. In the midst of the kingdoms, deep underground, lay a dwarven settlement. A dwarven knight named Ulstus Peer heard the stories of Coalaxys's advance and realized that unification was the only way to save his people and perhaps the entire land. Sir Ulstus possessed a simple, straightforward personality that drew followers to his side. Surface-dwellers thought the dwarves gruff and xenophobic, and Sir Ulstus vowed to change that.

Sir Ulstus believed that the rulers of the surface kingdoms would pay no attention to his sensible arguments. Instead of pleading his case before monarchs, he visited the churches of every village, town, and city in the kingdoms. Sir Ulstus was a foreigner, a dwarf of a religion most knights had not heard of, but he was also a commanding presence and an intelligent speaker. A human paladin of the god of strength-at-arms was the first to join his team, then a wandering knight of the god of justice, and then a band of holy warriors from a temple of the Sun. Soon word spread across the kingdoms: an army of knights marched on Coalaxys.

One by one, the embattled kingdoms pledged their allegiance to Sir Ulstus. Coalaxys's forces, formidable as they were, could not stand against the combined might of the armies of seven kingdoms, led by a contingent of holy knights hundreds strong. Sir Ulstus himself severed the head of the great red wyrm. Coalaxys's shattered army fled, leaving the kingdoms to celebrate their triumph.

Sir Ulstus and his men disbanded, but always remained in touch should the land need a unified defense once again — as it has, many times. Now centuries later, the seven kingdoms have allied and broken alliances and gone to war and more kingdoms have formed and fallen, until the political geography is almost unrecognizable from that of Sir Ulstus's time. Sir Ulstus himself died many years ago. But his legacy lives on in the knightly order known as the Wardens of the Seven Kingdoms.

Lady Junaith, a strong-willed paladin, now holds the title of Grand Warden. She organizes the ranks of the Wardens when need arises. A council of advisors aids Lady Junaith, developing strategies and tactics for battle and reviewing troop strength periodically. Lady Junaith has served as a paladin for almost thirty years, and as Grand Warden for ten. Rumors abound that she plans to retire soon, and none know who will take her place.

Almost every city and large town for thousands of miles boasts a chapter-house. The Wardens of the Seven Kingdoms appreciate new recruits, and em-

ploy hundreds of runners to carry messages between the chapter-houses. Semaphore towers also facilitate communication. From the central chapter-house, an old stone keep rumored to have once housed a lieutenant of Coalaxys's, Lady Junaith can rally the Wardens in less than a day.

**Membership:** The Wardens of the Seven Kingdoms rely on manpower most of all. While any dedicated fighter may join the Wardens, only holy knights with exceptional fighting ability become commanders.

Anyone wishing to join the Wardens may do so simply by signing up at a chapter-house. There is no fee to enter the organization, but the application states that members must answer the call of the Wardens. Those who join and then fail to serve are charged with breach of contract; they may be fined or faced with jail time.

A paladin wishing to join the Wardens faces more stringent entry requirements. The Wardens maintain a force of paladins to serve as commanders. Applicants must demonstrate their knowledge of history, tactics, and strategy, and describe their own practical battle experience.

A rigorous set of physical tests follow. Applicants must display proficiency in mounted combat, melee combat, hand-to-hand fighting, and ranged weaponry. The Wardens conduct these tests with practice dummies and blunted weapons.

Once an applicant has proved both his intelligence and his prowess in battle, he takes the title of Warden. Wardens must also pledge their allegiance to the order in writing.

Chapter-houses provide training and resources for members of the order. A Warden can always find someone to spar with, healing, lodging, and reliable information at a chapter-house.

**Charter:** Wardens must keep alert for rumors and signs of great evils massing in the area. Wardens never interfere with an individual kingdom's welfare; they leave politics strictly alone. Only when a threat great enough to jeopardize multiple kingdoms appears do the Wardens mobilize.

Wardens must obey their superiors and never falter in battle. Their duty is to preserving the world from terrible threats, and they must lay down their lives if necessary. A Warden values courage over all.

## THE REDEEMERS

Paladins portray an image of pure-hearted knights of valor. Many believe that only the most virtuous can successfully battle the legions of evil. Sometimes, though, the best weapon against evil is evil. Blackguards turned back to the path of righteousness offer keen insight into the nature of the foe; cursed lycanthropes brought back to their natural shape know too well how to struggle against the beast; servitors of evil convinced to abandon their treacherous ways prove unswervingly loyal to the cause of good. The Redeemers believe that all beings deserve a second chance, and fill their ranks with those who have taken their second chance and put it to good use.

**History and Hierarchy:** Brid the Black began her life as the offspring of a female orc raped by human men who caught her alone on patrol. Brid's mother raised her to despise humans unconditionally. When Brid was sixteen, a force of humans descended on her tribe and killed scores of orcs. Brid rallied the survivors and led them in a bloody massacre on nearby human villages.

Her band grew, and soon the peasants in the area all feared the warrior called Brid the Black. The more Brid killed, the deeper her hurt and rage grew.

At the height of her bloody rampage, Brid began experiencing unusual dreams. In the midst of her regular dreams full of painful memories and bloodshed, she would notice a human man in simple robes watching her. As soon as she saw the man, he spoke gently to her about her actions, her past, and her beliefs. Brid could not respond to the man in her dream, but his words stayed with her during her waking hours. She felt at war with herself, torn by her hatred for humans and the kind words of the dream-man.

For a month the dreams continued and Brid became more and more unstable. Some days she would waver and show mercy, seemingly unable to stomach any more bloodshed. Other days she would rally and attack more viciously than ever. Finally she and her men attacked a village, driving the peasants from their homes and setting the huts alight. Brid broke into a small wooden structure in the center of the village, only to find the man from her dreams waiting inside. Brid stood dumbly as the man introduced himself as Iain of the Sun, a priest and sorcerer who had heard Brid's story and believed she could be redeemed.

Brid shook herself out of her stunned reverie. She lifted her blade but found herself unable to strike the priest down. She retreated. Brid spent the next few days fighting with her nature and contemplating what more there could be for her in this life. In the end, she murdered the strongest members of her band and returned to Iain. The priest welcomed her and worked to bring Brid to the light. She spent years doing penance and seeking atonement, and nearly a decade after her bloody assault on humankind ended, she became Brid the Bright, paladin of the Sun.

In her declining years, Brid the Bright formed an organization she called the Redeemers. Following the example of Iain, the Redeemers seek to bring lost souls back to the flock. They offer sanctuary to evil creatures seeking to mend their ways and offer counsel to conflicted souls. The Redeemers walk a fine line between saving souls and harboring evil; they constantly remain on guard against those who would abuse their mercy. While many view the Redeemers with suspicion, none can deny that some of the greatest champions of good came from their ranks.

The Redeemers have no organized hierarchy. Members support and counsel each other, and seek to help any reclaimable souls that cross their paths. Most belong to another knightly order, although some walk solitary paths. Because their connection to the order marks them as reformed evildoers, many Redeemers keep their allegiance private.

**Membership:** Few beings apply to become a Redeemer. Instead, Redeemers seek out evildoers that might be turned to the side of good. While many evil creatures sneer at a Redeemer's offer of help, some take the words to heart.

The only way to join the organization is by invitation. Those who refuse to give up their evil ways, of course, do not become members. But if an evildoer truly repents and works hard to earn forgiveness, then his mentor, when satisfied, grants him membership. Redeemers mark themselves with a tattoo, brand, or medallion showing a closed eye within a many-rayed sun. The symbol represents Brid's rejection of the orc god to follow the path of the Sun.

**Charter:** A Redeemer considers it her duty to offer salvation to any evil creature she can reasonably hope to influence. A Redeemer will not offer redemption to creatures she cannot communicate with, or those actively attempting to kill her or her companions. She fights immediate threats first, and if she has a chance afterwards she may try to talk to her enemy.

Redeemers traveling in adventuring parties talk to any captured prisoners, working to turn their hearts to good. They prefer to try diplomatic measures against enemies first, using violence only as a last resort. Some Redeemers believe that it is their duty to offer redemption to everything, never utilizing violence, and take vows of pacifism. These Redeemers are quite rare.

A final tenet of the Redeemer order is that all members must seek to redeem evil magic items. Upon her induction into the order, a Redeemer learns how to cleanse evil items, and it is her duty to do so, or else bring the item to someone who can. A Redeemer who finds an irredeemable magic item must seek to destroy it.



A breeze stirred the shadow darkened room from the only window in Malqueis's quarters. Startled, he sloshed wine over the rim of his cup and onto his finest nightshirt. He had not opened the sash

Malqueis sat in the dim light of his dying fireplace eating a very sweet roast suckling pig. He mulled retributive acts toward his serving boy over in his mind for filching a taste of the tender syrupy meat. He knew full well that his cook probably had been the culprit but he would never take his ire out on the cook. Malqueis's own girth would not allow it and besides he would never again find such a talented chef. He raised his glass of expensive wine to his lips and drank heavily. What kind he did not know though he had specifically wanted the entire shipment re-appropriated for his own use. Being an elected official brought with it many rewards. The large official chuckled at his own fortunes and entertainment to come while beads of cooked sugar stuck to his lips and red wine leaked down his chin.

"I guess it will have to be stripes for the lad", he spoke with a voice that could only come from such a large man still chewing vestiges of flesh and gurgling down drink. Seeing the young boy's clothing strip from him as he tried to escape the house doorman put glee in his heart. Malqueis supposed many of his peers looked down on him for his deviant tastes. At this thought, he huffed and began to raise his glass again. He would show them all one day.

and was sure it had not been opened in a fortnight. Little did he know of fear because any who might have reason to come after him were already on his payroll. Those more dangerous were paid the most and those too stubborn to take pay were dead. He had been the most powerful viceroy of mercantile endeavors for nearly twenty years and his grip was tight upon the city. He wasn't afraid.

A sweet tinkling voice lightly rose out of the silence. Singing in the street at this hour, thought Malqueis. He would have this interloper's sweet head wrung off if he could have her caught. All thought about the window's strange condition left him as outrage filled him to his jiggling jowls. He scooted his bottom to the edge of his chair and swayed back the give his great size enough momentum to rise. It took two attempts. Once up, he began to waddle toward the window.

Stopping short, Malqueis realized he was in danger but fear still did not enter into his mind. The source of the voice had been in the room with him since it had begun. Cold sweat suddenly trickled down his vast back into his crack making him further uncomfortable.

"Who are you? I will have you arrested and executed... Do you know who I am?", all this in rapid succession with his firm master's voice and still Malqueis could not drive

down the rising sensation that was beginning to consumed him. He could not decide if he was hot or cold. He began to sweat profusely and it was fear that wet his skin as thick as his own secretions. It had been a long time since he had felt the tingle and his recognition didn't help him establish control.

The singing stopped and even though whispered, her voice pierced the silence like a fine rasp on wooden artistry, "I hear you like children?"

Malqueis stumbled back nearly falling with the sudden breach. And the whisper had seemed to be directly in his ear.

"Leave my house or suffer the consequences", as he spoke the realization occurred to him that it was a child that he faced. Relief settled on him. A child, he had nothing to fear from a child.

"Yes, I am a child you disgusting pig", the voice spoke just above a whisper. Di had read his mind by his body language. He was lowering his defenses. She had circled around him in the shadows of his plush furniture. Everything had been made over-sized to accommodate the man's girth.

To Malqueis it came from nearly behind him on his left where before the whisper had been on his right. This little girl wants to play games. Ecstasy reigned in his heart at the thought of the games he would play with her. Images flitted in mind as he turned stalking to find the voice.

"Come little girl, there is no need to be vulgar. I'm sure you just needed to get out of the weather. Forget about my ravings. I am an important man and not very used to visits at such late hours", this Malqueis said in his most disarming tone. It had worked for him many times and if didn't at first the rock candy he kept on his bed stand would speed up the process. He turned further searching for the source of the voice though he still could not see the young girl. She must be very young but not too young. Hope, he felt hope.

Something hard pelted him on the side of his head from the direction of the window. Whatever it was, dropped onto his shoulder and despite being fat his reflexes were not too slow to catch the offending object. Slowly, it came to him what he was holding.

Di had grabbed the coffer with the candy as she passed by and went under the bed. She threw another piece with similar effect. Slowly, she thought. Not yet. He would die before she was done but not yet. Her tinkling laughter followed each throw.

"Stop that....", was all Malqueis could say as the nameless voice rained every piece of candy in his golden box on him. He was struck several times in the face with stinging effect and he could not guard himself because she kept moving around him. He had caught glimpses of her but nothing more than a mere hint. He stumbled toward his bed trying to make a better defense when the candy stopped. Malqueis looked everywhere and could see nothing. The fire had died further leaving less light as it went to coals.

Searing pain stretched up from his lower leg near the ankle and Malqueis fell on his face. He had hardly settled when another stab of pain attack him in his fleshy buttock. Now instead of candy he was being stabbed.

“How does it feel to be helpless?”, came the cold and hard voice no longer sweet and tinkling. To Malqueis it seemed that it could not be the same that had scared him so earlier and now the fear had returned in earnest. A dark claw gripped his heart and mind, flight was all that he could think of now.

“What ever you are being paid, I’ll pay more. Much more. Please don’t kill me”, at the sound of his pleas Di knew that she had broken him and knew before hand that it would be no task at all. It wasn’t even fun, this time.

“Whatever gave you the idea that I’m being paid. Do the children you keep here as slaves, to empty your refuse pots, clean your filthy floors, or suffer your grimy hands get paid?”, the edge of Di’s voice had narrowed and hardened as sharp as her dagger which she again plunged into this fat man. In fact, she had been paid or at least would be. As for his slave children, Di did not care about them.

Squeals for salvation would have echoed into the night alerting the entire house but for Malqueis being fat. His wind was constricted with the pressure from the weight of his assailant and struggle as he might nothing stopped the piercings. One to his left

shoulder, one to his side, one to his buttocks again, and always a pause before the next stroke.

Di had been known among her guild as being calculated and she intended pain, immense pain before death. Gradually after dozens of strokes Di had realized her quarry had passed out. Malqueis would not be waking up. A few short moments of work and Malqueis’ head was resting on his pillow.

Di quietly stepped to the window, renewed her tune with a shallow hum, her favorite, and passed over the window seal. Her passing marked by a large blood smear.

\*\*\*\*

“Send in the Doll”, Trent said in an offhand manner.

“Yeah”

“Shut your mouth Twin”, Trent had snapped his head around frightening the younger boy.

“Yeah”, came another voice. The voice was mostly the same but had a slightly different tenor.

“You shut your trap too”, Trent’s anger nearly flared to open flames. The Twins always had that effect on him. It was always ‘yeah’ or some other parrot phrase. He wonder if they had half a mind between them but they were indispensable at times. If one of them should die or take a wound that altered his features then the one or both may need to have an accident. Until then, they would be his do-boys.

Di had watched and listened as her older brother spoke and outwardly she showed no sign of irritation. That cheeky doll-faced little wench. Di had hated the Doll from second one and had she been alone with her in that ally, no one would have known she had lived. Hundreds of times, Di had run scenarios in her head as to how she would rid herself of this minor irritation.

“You must have a new ladylove, Trent”, Di teased. She knew this would irritate him because he did fancy the Doll but she did not return the sentiment. Di even smiled a little as she saw Trent freeze in place and still himself to respond.

Trent had had enough of Di’s taunts and he would do something about it right now. He advanced two steps toward the table where Di had leaned against its edge then stopped. She was smiling. Di never smiled. Frightened more than he should be, he advanced nonetheless and took a chair from under the table next to her and sat down. He may be leader of the Waifs but he would not attack Di. Di would kill him, sure as he sat in the chair, and never think about it again.

The Doll, as she had been so dubbed, had just returned from the food run with Jak and the others. Her only thought was the meat pie in one pocket and the sweet red fruit in the other. Doll attached no guilt to the food she stole but sometimes she had other chores that she performed and if not, lose her place to take refuge from the

weather. The Waifs were heartless. They took anything of value from anyone who was unlucky enough to cross paths with them. She especially hated it when they had to kill.

Twin entered the spacious Grand Hall, that’s what they called it anyway. A dilapidated warehouse was hardly grand.

“YO!! Doll, Trent wants you. Now!!!”, He yelled for the benefit of everyone there. Doll could not reason out why she had been singled out. Everyday she was subject to taunts and endless abuse from Di. It was Di that had given her the new name. Immediately following that, Di had knocked her down, and planted a hard boot to her ribcage. With Di, Doll was sure that if given the chance she’d have been dead a long time ago. Thankfully, Jak had stopped her and if he was around Di steered clear. Doll didn’t think Di afraid of Jak but she didn’t play her stupid games with him.

It occurred to her that she had done something wrong again but what, she didn’t know. She had been reluctantly making her way to Trent’s room in the loft. If the delay took too long her punishment would be more severe. Last time she had to take money from a guard at one of the many bridge stations. Again, Di thought up the punishment and when Doll returned with the set prize Di flew into a rage and punched her in the stomach. After that Di disappeared from the warehouse for two days.

As she approached the door she noticed the twins with the most devious of grins sitting on barrels outside the door. Who if anyone could tell them apart? One snickered as she reached the door to open it.

Inside, the light was dim because the cracks in the roof had been repaired and even with two candles the light just seemed to not be enough. Doll scanned the room and nothing had changed since yesterday. There were two pallets and one nice bed, a table with three differing chairs, several casks and barrels in the corner near the door, and of course the four chests that reportedly held the waifs entire treasury. She couldn't help but notice Di where she sat next to Trent at the table. It was a small square table and Di had not placed herself on the side nearly facing Trent. She sat directly next to him and directly opposite of herself. Doll had to look across the table at both of them as Trent passed sentence.

"Doll", Trent sounded disappointed and understanding at the same time but Doll knew this was just an act.

"You know your not supposed to give away food. If some beggar wants a mouth full make him pay or he can go steal it himself", Trent had switched to his stern voice which was not an act.

Doll had been certain that no one had seen her drop the loaf of bread for the strange beggar. That didn't really matter because anyone of the dozen or so waifs excepting Jak and one or two others would tell on her in a heartbeat if it would curry favor with Trent.

"I've thought of something special for you to do to pay for your part of the loaf", Di said without smiling. Doll had

seen Di smile once and the result thereafter was one she would like to forget. All of Di's punishments were designed to get her caught or killed and Doll had little reason to wonder why. She just knew that Di wanted her dead.

CONTINUED  
NEXT ISSUE

# THE DUNGEON OF HO-GYROTH

AN EPISODIC ADVENTURE BY  
RONARSCORRUPTION

RonarsCorruption here, and I'm going to run you through a simple adventure every issue to help alleviate your creative needs. After all, running a new adventure every week (or more) can take a lot of work.

This adventure works well with some setup, although the party could easily just run across the temple when wandering through a mountain range, or forest and you need something to throw at them.

Setup: The orcish warlord, Ho-Gyroth, has been slowly rising through the ranks of power in the orcish armies and governments. While orcs are not normally a great threat, his rapid rise in authority and his use of dark magic have the local governments worried enough to hire bounty-hunters to bring his career to a halt.

Once the party has been introduced to the quest, their obvious first task is to discover where he currently is. While this could be a whole other adventure in itself, to speed things along you can assume the government hiring the party has already done the footwork and all the party needs to do is head out and do their thing.

The Dungeon: Ho-Gyroth is currently holed up in a collapsed fort that was built overtop of a long forgotten temple for demon-worship, which is the ultimate source of his power, both political and physical. The fort can be placed wherever you need it to be,

but forts of this side work well on mountainsides overlooking less used roads.

While the top section of the keep is almost abandoned, one of the fort's watch towers still remains standing several stories above the rubble around it. If the party is making no effort to hide, the orcs here will spot them approaching the fort and be prepared for when the PCs approach. One of the three guards will move from the tower into the keep's main door and if the battle begins to look grim, he will flee inside to attempt to warn the others with the gong at the top of the staircase in the next area.

While you don't need a story for every abandoned keep and temple the PCs run across, there's always the chance the PCs will wonder about where they came from. This particular keep was originally built eighty-five years before current day as a waypoint for soldiers travelling between two nearby castles, and as such is fairly small. It fell into disuse when one of the soldiers carelessly brought an egg he won in a card-game with him into the fort with to lay-over for several days. Meanwhile, the mother dragon came looking for it, and knocked down two of the walls and caved in the roof of the main keep itself to retrieve it. The damage also led to the collapse of the floor in the main atrium into the temple below.

Inside the gate to the keep, the floor of the main atrium has almost completely collapsed inwards, only a small ledge around the edge of the room remaining. A heavy iron gong and a mallet rests to the immediate right of the

door. All the other chambers of the keep are collapsed and thoroughly cleaned out. Peering into the collapsed floor reveals a deep chasm into the side of which someone has carved a solid staircase out of the rock, descending into darkness.

#### **Orcish Scouts, CR 4**

Orc scout x3

3rd-level humanoid ranger

HP: 3d8+3 (15hp)

AC: 15 (+1 dex, +3 armor, +1 shield) 11 touch, 14 flat-footed

Initiative: +1

Speed: 30ft (6 squares)

Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+6

Attack: longbow +4 ranged (1d8+3) or shortsword +6 melee (1d6+3 19-20/x2)

Full Attack: longbow +4 ranged (1d8+3) or shortsword +6 melee (1d6+3 19-20/x2)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: —

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity

Saves: Fort +4, Reflex +4, Will +0

Abilities: STR: 16, DEX: 13, CON: 12, INT: 8, WIS: 8, CHA: 6

Skills: Spot +5

Feats: Alertness, Point blank shot, Rapid Shot

Ability: favored enemy:

Humanoid(Human), Track, wild empathy, combat style: archery, endurance

Equipment: longbow, arrows x20, shortsword, buckler, studded leather

Tactics: The orcs have the advantage of height. if the PCs have not noticed them as they approach the keep, they open fire from the top floor of the tower first, drawing the PC's attention. Once the PC's have entered the watch-tower, they make use of the narrow staircase leading up to the top to fight one PC at a time while keeping their +2 height advantage. Also, if they noticed the PCs ahead of time, once the PCs are in the staircase, the orc who had been waiting in the keep's doorway (staying hidden) will come up behind and attack the hopefully undefended casters in back.

At the bottom of the staircase is a single tunnel leading into the cliff face, recently widened, which ends at a set of old stone doors. These doors are locked from the inside, with a lock DC of 20. The lock can be burst with a strength check DC 25.

Beyond the door is a narrow hallway leading into the temple atrium. The floor and walls are covered with elaborate mosaics of demons and devils fighting against

angels, and typically winning. There are also occasional depictions of demons performing terrible rituals on humanoids with unfortunate attention to detail. Anyone examining the mosaics closely must succeed a fort save DC 15 or become nauseated for 1d6+4 rounds.

The main atrium is twenty feet deep by thirty wide, with a heavy support pillar in the middle of either side of the room. The main doorway has collapsed outwards off its hinges, revealing that the ceiling in the hallway beyond has fallen in. However, there is a smaller door on either side of the main room. A search check DC 18 reveals that the left-hand door sees much more recent traffic than the right hand door.

Behind the right hand door is a hallway that circles around the main atrium (ending at the collapsed ceiling, which is impassable). There are two doors on the opposite side of the wall.

The closer one to the door to the atrium contains two stone statues to demon-gods. There is a stain on the floor that a DC 10 heal check reveals as recently dried blood. In place of their eyes, the demons have glowing rubies that illuminate the room (a permanent light effect). There are a total of three (the



left eye of the right statue is missing), and each gem is worth 1,100gp. However, attempting to remove any gem triggers the trap.

The further room was a library at one point, although some number of years ago a wild beast, or more likely a demon, got loose here and caused significant damage to almost anything that might have been of value. A search check DC 20 will find enough information amongst the ancient papers to reveal that this temple was built to praise all demon princes, but more recently Orcus in particular before the temple was buried. This is also an ideal time for the DM to insert any plot information that he wishes to pass on to the PCs if he is using Ho-gyroph as a minion of a greater evil power, or wishes to re-use Ho-gyroph again in a later adventure.

#### **Demon's Breath Trap**

CR 4

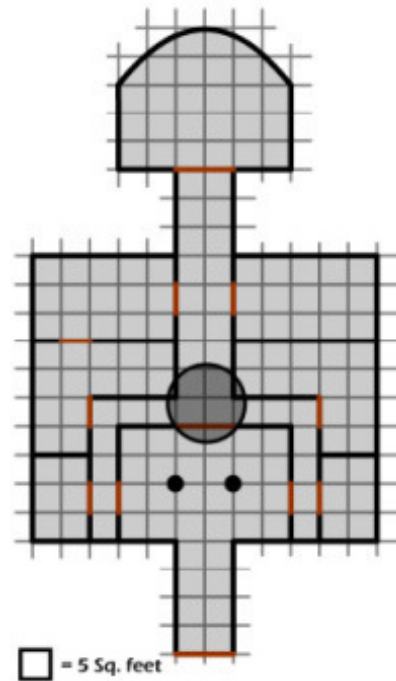
Triggering the trap by attempting to remove any of the demon statue's eyes activates a 5d6 burning hands trap that covers the entire room. Characters caught in the blast may make a DC 15 reflex save for half damage. The trap takes 3 rounds to recharge, during which time a low-pitched wheezing noise can be heard. The trap's spout and can be located in the back wall with a DC 22 search check and a DC 23 disable device check disables it for one activation, at which point it begins to recharge again.

Lastly, there is evidence that there was another door here once, but that it was sealed over a long time ago.

The hallway exiting the left side of the atrium is similar to the one on the right. The

hallway circles around the atrium and ends at the collapsed ceiling. There are two doors in the opposite wall.

The closer room is totally empty, al-



though marks on the floor indicate that there were two heavy square bases in the room (similar to the statues of the room opposite) but they are no longer there. The further room is the kitchen and pantry. There is one orc here, preparing a freshly slaughtered deer carcass which is laying across the table that dominates the middle of the room. There is a doorway in the wall to the right. The only thing of value in the kitchen, besides from the masterwork knife the orc was using, is several pounds of spice. There are four pounds of spice (in eight half-pound bags) worth 50gp per pound.

The doorway opens up into the mess hall. If the gong upstairs has been rung, the orcs will have their glaives close at hand, and their crossbows cocked and loaded. When the door opens, they will use their surprise round to grab their weapons, and flip over the table to use as cover. If the gong has not been rung, all four orcs in this room are gathered around the table playing cards, their crossbows at the door near the kitchen, and their glaives in the corner nearest to them. They will use the first round moving to the corner and grab their weapons. There is a door

**Orc chef**

CR 2  
4rd-level humanoid expert  
HP: 4d6 (12hp)  
AC: 13 (+2 dex, +1 armor)  
12 touch, 11 flat-footed  
Initiative: +2  
Speed: 30ft (6 squares)  
Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+6  
Attack: dagger +6 melee (1d6+3 19-20/x2)  
Full Attack: dagger +6 melee (1d6+2 19-20/x2)  
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.  
Special Attacks: —  
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity  
Saves: Fort +4, Reflex +4, Will +0  
Abilities: STR: 15, DEX: 15, CON: 10, INT: 8, WIS: 8, CHA: 5  
Skills: Spot +5, heal +5, search +5  
Feats: Weapon Finesse, Skill Focus  
Ability: —  
Equipment: masterwork large dagger, heavy leather apron

Tactics: The chef will at first back away into the corner and not attack the party. If the party offers him the chance to run away, he will immediately. If the party makes any aggressive motion, he will attack the nearest party member to him whenever possible, and flee if the option presents itself.

with the same nauseating murals as the entrance tunnel.

The door across the hallway is the bunks. There are thirteen fur-covered piles of straw (crude beds) in the room, three of which are occupied. If the gong was rung upstairs, these orcs will be awake and have put on

in the right hand wall. In addition to the treasure on the bodies, there are 100gp worth of coins of various types on one table, as well as a glowing gem (the missing one from the demon worship room) worth 1,100gp. There is also a deck of well-used but fine playing cards, that could be sold to a collector for 150gp.

The door leads back into the main hallway, the collapsed section of ceiling visible to the group's immediate right. There is another door directly across from where the party just emerged, and the hallway extends for 50ft to the left, covered

their armor, otherwise they will have awoken from the fight in the mess across the hall and only grabbed their weapons (unless the PCs made effort to specifically be quiet, in which case they will all be asleep). The engage the PCs in melee combat as soon as the PCs enter. If the PCs bypass this room, they will come up behind them in the hallway once they have engaged ho-gyroth.

Any equipment the orcs do not have equipped is scattered about the room, as well as a *helmet of comprehend languages and read magic*.

The doorway at the end of the hallway is elaborate stonework, and unlocked. Listening at it, one can hear snippets of Abysmal and other arcane languages.

Pushing the door open, it swings quickly, for the doors are counterweighted just so, so that they weigh almost nothing. They slam against the walls, and everyone in the

**Mess Hall Orcs**

Orc Burly x4  
CR 4  
3rd-level humanoid fighter  
HP: 3d10+6 (21hp)  
AC: 17 (+1 dex, +6 armor, +2 shield) 11 touch, 16 flat-footed  
Initiative: +2  
Speed: 30ft (6 squares)  
Base Attack/Grapple: +6/+9  
Attack: heavy crossbow +4 ranged (1d10 19-20/x2) or halbred +6 melee (1d10+3 / x3)  
Full Attack: heavy crossbow +4 ranged (1d10 19-20/x2) or halbred +6 melee (1d10+3 / x3)  
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.  
Special Attacks: —  
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity  
Saves: Fort +5, Reflex +2, Will -1  
Abilities: STR: 17, DEX: 13, CON: 14, INT: 7, WIS: 7, CHA: 7  
Skills: Spot +5, heal +5, search +5  
Feats: Alertness, Improved Bull Rush, Dodge  
Ability: —  
Equipment: masterwork Glaive, masterwork banded mail, heavy wooden shield, heavy crossbow, crossbow bolt x 10

Tactics: If the orcs were aware of the party due to the gong upstairs being rung, they will use the surprise round to kick over the table, and fire their crossbows at the party coming through the door. Otherwise, they will expend their first round getting up and grabbing their glaives from the corner of the room nearest to them. On the following turn, the orcs will attempt to bull-rush any PCs that look particularly prone to being knocked over. On following turns, they will attempt to form a solid line to prevent PCs from flanking them.

**Bunk Orcs**

Orc Snoozy x3  
 3rd-level humanoid fighter  
 HP: 3d10+6 (21hp)  
 AC: 17 (+1 dex, +6 armor, +2 shield) 11 touch, 16 flat-footed  
 Initiative: +2  
 Speed: 30ft (6 squares)  
 Base Attack/Grapple: +6/+9  
 Attack: Glaive +6 melee (1d10+3 /x3)  
 Full Attack: Glaive +6 melee (1d10+3 /x3)  
 Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.  
 Special Attacks: —  
 Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity  
 Saves: Fort +5, Reflex +2, Will -1  
 Abilities: STR: 17, DEX: 13, CON: 14, INT: 7, WIS: 7, CHA: 7  
 Skills: Spot +5, heal +5, seach +5  
 Feats: Alertness, Improved Bull Rush, Dodge  
 Ability: —  
 Equipment: masterwork Glaive, masterwork banded mail, heavy wooden shield, heavy crossbow, crossbow bolt x 10

**Tactics:** If the orcs had time to put on their armor, they will bull rush the party as soon as they enter the room. They will then attempt to fight back-to-back to keep the PCs from flanking them. If they do not have their armor equipped, they will immediately form the back-to-back position.

room turns to the door. Ho-Gyroth is standing in the middle of the room, stripped to the waist and gleaming with sweat, accentuating the tattoos that covered his sculpted frame. Across the room, you can see what he was doing, a rift in the very fabric of the universe stretches from the floor of the room to the ceiling, and it's edges are jagged. Beyond, you can see the vague forms of teeming masses of demons.

Along the side are two burly eunuchs hold his things, along with their own. On the left, the

**Boss Encounter**

Ho-Gyroth  
 CR6  
 6th-level humanoid Fighter  
 2, Cleric 4  
 HP 2d10+4d8+12 (44hp)  
 AC: 13 (+1 dex, +2 deflection)  
 11 touch, 12 flat-footed  
 Initiative: +1  
 Speed: 30ft (6 squares)  
 Base Attack/Grapple: +8/+11  
 Attack: greatclub +10 melee (1d10+7 /x2)  
 Full Attack: greatclub +10 melee (1d10+7 /x2)  
 Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.  
 Special Attacks: —  
 Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity  
 Saves: Fort +9, Reflex +2, Will +6  
 Abilities: STR: 17, DEX: 13, CON: 14, INT: 15, WIS: 14, CHA: 7  
 Skills: Concentration +7, Bluff +3, Heal +3, Spot +5, Listen +7, sense motive +7  
 Feats: Alertness, Combat Casting, Cleave, Power Attack, Improved Sunder  
 Ability: —  
 Spells: (Domains: Darkness, Evil) 0- Cure Minor Wounds, Detect Magic, Inflict Minor Wounds, Resistance, Read Magic; 1- Bane, Cure Light Wounds, Entropic Shield, Protection from Good; 2- Bull's Strength, Sound Burst, Blindness  
 Equipment: Ring of Protection +2, +2 anarchic greatclub, +1 breastplate (not equipped), choker of the demon's voice, 650gp

**Choker of the Demon's Voice**

This black studded choker wraps tightly around the wearers neck. When worn, this item allows the user to speak and understand Abysmal and Infernal, the languages of devils and demons. However, wearing it also gives the user a faint hiss and crackle to their voice, granting a -4 penalty to diplomacy checks.

Orcish Eunuch x2  
 3rd-level humanoid fighter  
 HP: 3d10+15 (33hp)  
 AC: 18 (+1 dex, +6 armor, +3 shield) 11 touch, 17 flat-footed  
 Initiative: +2  
 Speed: 30ft (6 squares)  
 Base Attack/Grapple: +6/+9  
 Attack: Glaive +6 melee (1d10+3 /x3)  
 Full Attack: Glaive +6 melee

(1d10+3 /x3)  
 Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.  
 Special Attacks: —  
 Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity  
 Saves: Fort +5, Reflex +2, Will -1  
 Abilities: STR: 17, DEX: 13, CON: 20, INT: 7, WIS: 7, CHA: 7  
 Skills: Spot +5, heal +5, seach +5  
 Feats: Alertness, Improved Bull Rush, Dodge  
 Ability: —  
 Equipment: masterwork glaive, masterwork banded mail, heavy wooden shield +1  
**Tactics:** In the first round, the two eunuchs will bull rush the door, attempting to knock down any PCs in the doorway, and prevent them access to Ho-Gyroth. They will use the reach available to their glaives to attack the further back PCs over their toppled allies, which still receiving AOOs when the knocked over characters attempt to stand up. Ho-Gyroth will cast entropic shield on himself. On the second round, Ho-Gyroth will cast Bull's strength on himself, and on subsequent rounds he will use his healing spells on the eunuchs to keep them standing for longer. Ho-gyroth will allow both his Eunuchs to fall before engaging the party, using power attack against any obvious casters, and using inflict minor wounds on any PCs that have fallen but been stabilized, to distract the PCs from attacking him. On the third round of combat, if the orcs from the bunk room were not yet encountered, they will emerge from the room in the same state they would have been encountered there, and bull-rush the party from the back, hopefully reaching the unprotected casters in the back.

If the DM wishes ho-gyroth to survive the encounter, he needs to have backed away to the rift behind him, and simply make a withdraw action through it when he is injured to a point that he is likely to die by the next round. He should drop his great club in the retreat to still reward the PCs for defeating him.

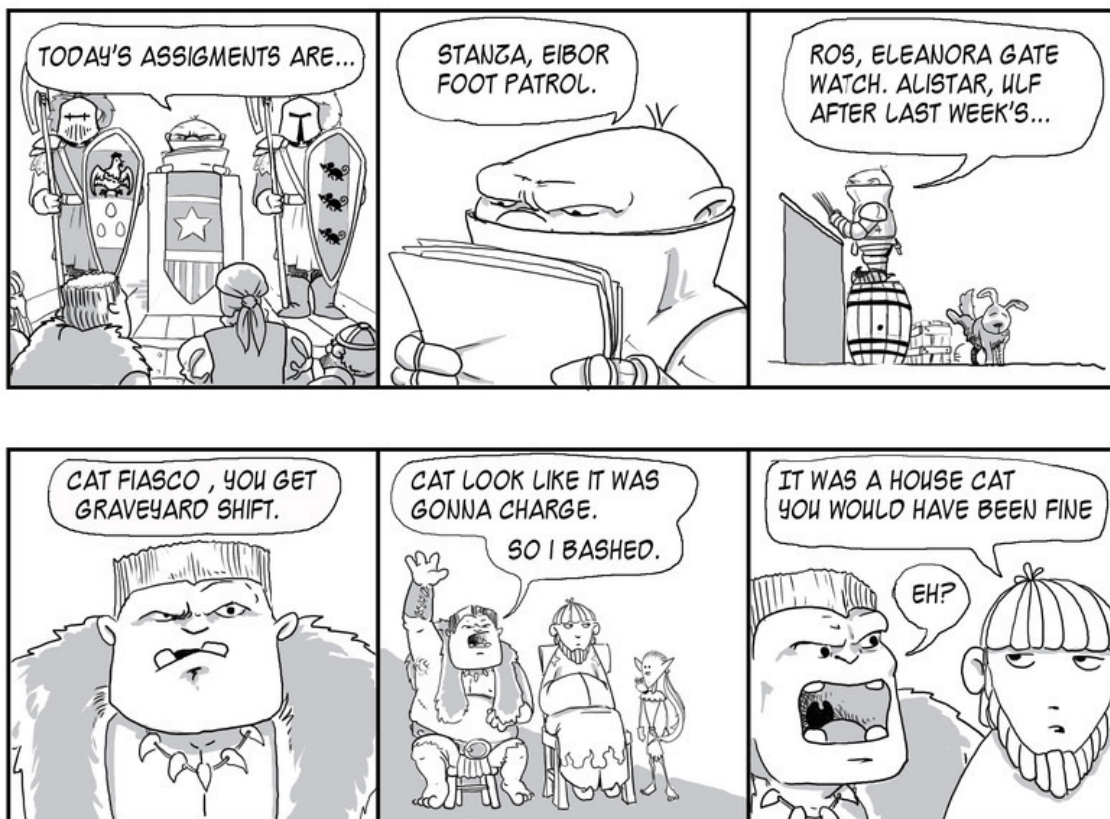
eunich holds a huge greatclub made of polished ebony and inlaid with runes, and on the right a breastplate of a similar material. Surely the black armor and weapons make him a force in battle. Then, without even offering a chance to apologize or debate, Ho-Gyloth catches the club thrown by his eunich and attacks...

Once Ho-gyloth is defeated, the temple is quiet, and the PCs can explore any rooms they passed up, rest, and return back to town for any reward they have been offered, and obviously their next adventure.

Portions of this article, including feats, classes, and spells are Open Game Content.

# CONSTABLES

WRITTEN BY ROBI ILLUSTRATED BY LADYOFHATS



# ASK ~~AXE~~ AMY

Dear Amy,

I'm a single mother with three children all under the age of fifteen. My eldest, fourteen, has begun drinking, and I'm worried that she'll convince her younger siblings that this is okay. I've tried talking to her about this, but she just walks out of the room. I want to give her room to experiment and make her own mistakes, but I don't want those mistakes to harm my other children.

Is it time to cast Finger of Death and hope for the best on the next two? I'm worried that the youngest, who is only four, might start to ask questions about where her sister is, and I don't know how to explain saving throws to someone who hasn't even rolled ability scores yet.

-Lawful Evil in Hommlet

## AMY SAYS:

The only acceptable answer is to banish her from your household and lay the burden of raising her on someone else. There is a fifty percent chance that a good-aligned family will take her in, fix her problems, and turn her into your greatest enemy. The alternative is that she is taken in by an evil family who encourages her to drink so that when she grows up she can destroy the Village of Hommlet in a drunken rage.

You win either way.

## AMY SAYS:

There are still philosophy majors because there are questions that have no answers. Some people are not convinced by religion/faith, and therefore seek an answer among the intellectuals.

Dear Amy,

Four thousand years ago, someone or someones set in wet clay the Epic of Gilgamesh, which may well be the oldest story ever written down. Tablets XIII and IX contain Gilgamesh's lamentations at the death of his beloved friend Enkidu. Why, the hero asks, must people be born only to die? He determines to seek the secret of immortality, despite being told several times his journey is fraught with anger and ultimately futile. Why must people be born, live life, love - only to die in the end?

That's not my question. Nobody can answer that question. My question is this:

After 4000 years of not being able to answer the question, why are there still Philosophy Majors?

Where's the Rum?  
ridin gaijin

Dear Amy,

Where is all the rum?

Embrodak

## AMY SAYS:

Ha! Nothing is beyond the powers of the AxeMan!

ASK A

# DND MONSTER

BY MADSATYR

Dear Ask a Dnd Monster:

I like to consider myself stylish, but when I'm trying to find curvy jeans to fit my hourglass figure, it's crazy trying to find a pair that'll go over my hips but not leave a gap around my middle.

Every time I go shopping, it makes me depressed because I feel like a freak trying to find jeans that fit. I'm a size 8 and 5'6". If I even find jeans that fit, the styles are so outdated that I feel like I've aged 10 years just wearing them, and I'm not trying to go for that 34 year old look.

Hasn't someone gotten around to designing a pair of jeans for a woman with real hips, thighs, and a bubble butt, but has a small waist? Maybe without looking completely frumpy?

Signed,  
Fashion Conscious

Dear Conscious:

By the Great Mother, your butt sounds enormous! I am glad we are handling this issue via the Internet. My lair has room for only one enormous, round being.

Perhaps, instead of being so concerned about your appearance to others, your butt could enslave the lesser beings of the area, then demight say the same of

your butt.

If you worry that your butt might be rejected by the public at first sight, I recommend polymorphing your butt into a form more pleasing to the other humans. I found that the form of an elven senator worked well for me, but you may have to try a few different things until you find just the right shape for your area. Try making your butt look like an elven senator and see how it goes. There is no point to reinventing the wheel, here.

If subtle means fail you, then dominating by force is your best bet. Float in and lay waste by emitting rays of disintegrate and paralysis. If someone poses a serious challenge to your butt's might, disable them with the antimagic force in your central eye. You will find that your butt will prove a greater challenge than most adventurers realize at first, and you can use this to your advantage.

Once you have dominated the population around you with your butt, you should have no problems either getting compliments or forcing the population to create jeans to your liking. Magic will almost be a necessity, however, as any hole large enough to admit your bulk will not be able to shrink to fit your waist. Perhaps you can find an evil wizard to ally to your cause.

Good luck,  
Veritrux, the Beholder



Dear Ask a DnD Monster:

What things should I take care of before I put a hot tub in a sun room? Will the regular windows in the room give enough ventilation? Should I put in a ceiling fan?

What about flooring beneath the tub? Will 4x8-inch pavers (with crushed rock and sand base) support the weight without cracking? Should we use 16x16-inch stones (with same base) instead?

Thanks,

Future Hot Tub Owner



Dear Future:

Dis good question. Hot tub in sun room good idea. You can have big rocks for basking after you and lady friend take bath. Very romantic, and I know what I talking about.

Might want to shade windows. Dis keep heat down and keep you from being dazzled by sunlight. No want to make big move on clutch-mate and miss her mouf because Spot check low. Very embarrassing. Tribe talk about it for years at meetings. Say, "Hey, Skizzer! Remember when you go to kiss Bagya and miss mouf? Dat hilarious!" Oh yes. Everyone big comedian at tribe gatherings. I will eat them, someday.

Anyway, I see in list dat you leave off important item - there no traps in your plan. This big mistake in my opinion.

Lair should be full of traps. If you no much of a DIYer, dat fine. Simple traps cheap and easy to install. It easy to find used spring-loaded spike floor tiles in dis economy. Concealed lava pit usually around light fixture section at Home Depot, and they even install for you, too, which is good deal. For dat little extra something, might have valve in hot tub that fill tub wif acid. No label, because dat defeat purpose, but make sure you no mix up, either, as my cousin Xeesix tell you if he not was dead.

Finally, get profeshunal advice, too. I recommend sacrificing human and dancing naked on corpse until dragon spirit speak to you. Is cheaper and more reliable dan contractors. Sometimes dey give you power to cast spells, but dis not so helpful. Oh, yes, tank you big lizard. Dis purify food and drink spell-like ability just the thing for installing hot tub. Ha ha ha! Stoopid dragons. But serious now do not tell dem I say dat.

Good luck and may you kill many things wit hot tub,

Skizzer, the Kobold

Dear Ask a DnD Monster:

This is slightly... okay, very embarrassing.

My boyfriend is rather, um, uninhibited in public. This includes mainly groping my bum, breasts, and talking about our sex life in full view and earshot of everyone. He will not stop, and when I talk to him about it, he says that he'll stop, but twenty minutes later, he's at it again! I'd say this happens about ten to twenty times a day if we're together the whole day.

I've tried talking to him about how uncomfortable it makes me, and he just says I'm too conservative. So, I asked him, "How many 30 year olds do you see groping their girlfriends in public?" Obviously, you don't see any, but he seems to just be getting worse as time goes on.

Nothing works no matter what I do, and I'm just dreading the day he does it in front of people we know or my parents or something. Do you have any advice on how I can encourage him to keep this behind closed doors?

Please help,

Overfondled

Other Installments of  
**Ask a D&D Monster**  
can be found at:  
<http://askadndmonster.blogspot.com>

Oooh, this bad.

Me have same problem with girlfriend. Me was one groping, though. Me have Improved Grab ability and not afraid to use it! Heh heh. When she complain, me tell her me no care what people think because me am unstoppable juggernaut of destruction and also me very secure in self-esteem.

This bad move, though. Girl leave me. Says me not respect her. Also complain about friends running in fear when come over to play Settlers of Catan. She right, you know, and now she gone. Even epic level regeneration not cure broken heart.

You need make clear to boyfriend he not respecting you when do this. If he not care, you leave him. Will teach him important lesson in treating women right or will at least be someone else problem. If you not cool with that, swallow him whole. Will take him many rounds to cut way out of digestive tract. Probably dead from stomach acid by then. Either way good. Up to you. We all different.

Good luck,

Thrug, the Tarrasque



## OPEN GAME LICENSE

### Version 1.0a

The following text is the property of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. and is Copyright 2000 Wizards of the Coast, Inc (“Wizards”). All Rights Reserved.

1. Definitions: (a) “Contributors” means the copyright and/or trademark owners who have contributed Open Game Content; (b) “Derivative Material” means copyrighted material including derivative works and translations (including into other computer languages), potation, modification, correction, addition, extension, upgrade, improvement, compilation, abridgment or other form in which an existing work may be recast, transformed or adapted; (c) “Distribute” means to reproduce, license, rent, lease, sell, broadcast, publicly display, transmit or otherwise distribute; (d) “Open Game Content” means the game mechanic and includes the methods, procedures, processes and routines to the extent such content does not embody the Product Identity and is an enhancement over the prior art and any additional content clearly identified as Open Game Content by the Contributor, and means any work covered by this License, including translations and derivative works under copyright law, but specifically excludes Product Identity. (e) “Product Identity” means product and product line names, logos and identifying marks including trade dress; artifacts; creatures characters; stories, storylines, plots, thematic elements, dialogue, incidents, language, artwork, symbols, designs, depictions, likenesses, formats, poses, concepts, themes and graphic, photographic and other visual or audio representations; names and descriptions of characters, spells, enchantments, personalities, teams, personas, likenesses and special abilities; places, locations, environments, creatures, equipment, magical or supernatural abilities or effects, logos, symbols, or graphic designs; and any other trademark or registered trademark clearly identified as Product identity by the owner of the Product Identity, and which specifically excludes the Open Game Content; (f) “Trademark” means the logos, names, mark, sign, motto, designs that are used by a Contributor to identify itself or its products or the associated products contributed to the Open Game License by the Contributor (g) “Use”, “Used” or “Using”

means to use, Distribute, copy, edit, format, modify, translate and otherwise create Derivative Material of Open Game Content. (h) “You” or “Your” means the licensee in terms of this agreement.

2. The License: This License applies to any Open Game Content that contains a notice indicating that the Open Game Content may only be Used under and in terms of this License. You must affix such a notice to any Open Game Content that you Use. No terms may be added to or subtracted from this License except as described by the License itself. No other terms or conditions may be applied to any Open Game Content distributed using this License.

3. Offer and Acceptance: By Using the Open Game Content You indicate Your acceptance of the terms of this License.

4. Grant and Consideration: In consideration for agreeing to use this License, the Contributors grant You a perpetual, worldwide, royalty-free, non-exclusive license with the exact terms of this License to Use, the Open Game Content.

5. Representation of Authority to Contribute: If You are contributing original material as Open Game Content, You represent that Your Contributions are Your original creation and/or You have sufficient rights to grant the rights conveyed by this License.

6. Notice of License Copyright: You must update the COPYRIGHT NOTICE portion of this License to include the exact text of the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any Open Game Content You are copying, modifying or distributing, and You must add the title, the copyright date, and the copyright holder’s name to the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any original Open Game Content you Distribute.

7. Use of Product Identity: You agree not to Use any Product Identity, including as an indication as to compatibility, except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of each element of that Product Identity. You agree not to indicate compatibility or co-adaptability with any Trademark or Registered Trademark in conjunction with a work containing Open Game Content except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of such Trademark

or Registered Trademark. The use of any Product Identity in Open Game Content does not constitute a challenge to the ownership of that Product Identity. The owner of any Product Identity used in Open Game Content shall retain all rights, title and interest in and to that Product Identity.

8. Identification: If you distribute Open Game Content You must clearly indicate which portions of the work that you are distributing are Open Game Content.

9. Updating the License: Wizards or its designated Agents may publish updated versions of this License. You may use any authorized version of this License to copy, modify and distribute any Open Game Content originally distributed under any version of this License.

10 Copy of this License: You MUST include a copy of this License with every copy of the Open Game Content You Distribute.

11. Use of Contributor Credits: You may not market or advertise the Open Game Content using the

name of any Contributor unless You have written permission from the Contributor to do so.

12 Inability to Comply: If it is impossible for You to comply with any of the terms of this License with respect to some or all of the Open Game Content due to statute, judicial order, or governmental regulation then You may not Use any Open Game Material so affected.

13 Termination: This License will terminate automatically if You fail to comply with all terms herein and fail to cure such breach within 30 days of becoming aware of the breach. All sublicenses shall survive the termination of this License.

14 Reformation: If any provision of this License is held to be unenforceable, such provision shall be reformed only to the extent necessary to make it enforceable.

#### 15 COPYRIGHT NOTICE

Open Game License v 1.0 Copyright 2000, Wizards of the Coast, Inc.